

# for **YOUTH** by **YOUTH**

A Newsletter  
of the SYAB  
for Youth in Care  
in the State of Illinois

*Advocating for Youth In Care in Illinois*

May • 2007

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The regional and state-wide youth advisory boards partner with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (IDCFS) to provide advocacy and education for youth in care.

We provide information about resources, opportunities and policies that affect all youth. We are committed to empowerment, leadership and achievement across the State.

Our voices  
will be heard.



*Infinite Possibilities*

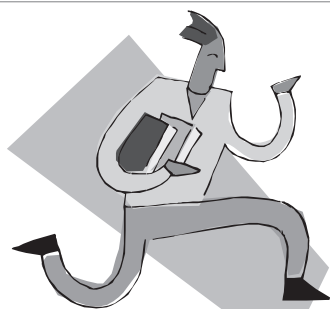
## Change — That's What it's All About



**Juan P. says the picture symbolizes the need to reach out and ask for help if you want to make changes. None of us are ever alone. Through your efforts and brilliance, you can walk through life and make it.**

**This issue of *By Youth For Youth* is dedicated to helping you make the changes that will help you succeed in life.**

# CHANGE IT UP—YOU CAN DO IT!



## IN COLLEGE ALREADY?

**ARE YOU GRADUATING  
HIGH SCHOOL  
NEXT YEAR?**

**BEGIN YOUR 2007-2008  
SCHOLARSHIP SEARCH  
NOW**

*Turn to page 14*

## Do you have your **20**? Are you working on your **40**?

### 20/40 WHAT?

Service Learning Hours, that's what

SL is a requirement for High School graduation

- Service Learning benefits communities and students.
- Students help the community by working on a problem that can make the community better.
- The students gain knowledge and learn new skills.
- It is a way of bringing the classroom and the community together.
- You need 20 hours to become a junior and 40 hours to graduate.

### AND

Mark Green, President of Hobert and William Smith College says community service and civic engagement will be an invaluable part of your personal and professional growth.

### TALK WITH YOUR SCHOOL COUNSELOR

## Meet Juan, Our Cover Artist

According to this month's cover artist, Juan P., none of us is alone. We all need to reach out and ask for help. The angel in his drawing shows that we are not alone. "Through your brilliance and effort," says Juan, "you, too, can walk on waters in your life."

Juan is 17 and has been doing art on and off for most of his life. He states: "I have a big interest in art but I can only draw in my limited free time. I usually draw in pencil and ink and I do comics, meaningful drawings, or graffiti. I spend most of my drawing time critiquing and improving."

**Note:** Check out the work of Mantese J and Michael C who also contributed artwork to this issue of *By Youth For Youth*.



*For Youth By Youth* is the newsletter of the Statewide Youth Advisory Board (SYAB) for youth in care in the State of Illinois. The newsletter is a project of the SYAB Newsletter Committee working in partnership with the Institute for Positive Living's Open Book Program. The purpose of this newsletter is to communicate important information to youth in care.

For information on *For Youth By Youth*, contact the Open Book Program, 435 E. 35th St., Chicago, IL 60616 (773-924-9802). Articles, photos and other contributions may be sent to Yvonne Jeffries c/o The Open Book Program or via email to [jyma@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jyma@sbcglobal.net).

**SYAB Officers:** President: Rena G.; Vice President: Ashley P.; Secretary: Mary G.; Sergeant at Arms: Larry A.; Historian: Karina L.

**Open Book Staff:** Marrice Coverson, Yvonne Jeffries, Janis Kearney, Mary Montgomery.

**Supported by:** IDCFS and Chicago Area Project Staff.

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**CHANGE IT UP—YOU CAN DO IT!**



# You CAN'T Afford— NOT to Take Advantage of These Opportunities!!!

by Amy J.

Every year, many students forgo a college education simply because they cannot afford to pay for it. Youth in care, adopted youth, and youth in a subsidized guardianship have another option. They can apply for the DCFS scholarship. This generous scholarship can make it possible for these youth to go to college.

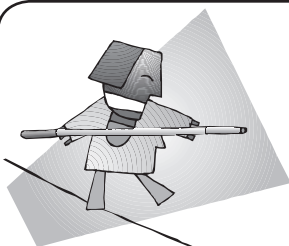
The scholarship is for four years of tuition and a \$458 monthly stipend. With this money, a college student's fees will almost be completely paid. This scholarship benefits students attending an Illinois state community college or any of the following colleges: Chicago State University; Northern Illinois University; Governor's State University; Eastern Illinois University; Illinois State University; Western Illinois University; University of Illinois; Northeastern Illinois University; Southern Illinois University

As with any scholarship, there are eligibility requirements. Applicants must be between the ages of 16 and 21 by the application deadline. The applicant is also required to have graduated from high school or obtained a GED by the end of the current school year. Most importantly, the Department of Children and Family Services must have court ordered legal guardianship of the applicant or the applicant must have proof of court ordered legal guardianship before adoption or being

in Subsidized Guardianship Program. Essentially, all applicants have to have been in the care of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services at some time.

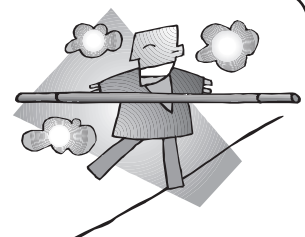
The scholarship application is fairly easy to complete. The form itself is very basic and asks for applicants to give general information, academic history, ACT and/or SAT test scores, college information, and a list of activities and honors. Youth must also write an essay for the application. This past year's essay was centered on reasons for the applicant's interest in a college education and why that applicant should be awarded the scholarship. This part of the scholarship is the most intimidating, but it does not have to be. The Statewide Youth Advisory Board facilitates essay writing workshops that can help with this process. (See the article titled "Steppin' Up To Their Future.") These workshops will be offered again during the 2007-2008 school year.

This scholarship is a great opportunity for youth. The generous contribution to the recipient's education is more than any scholarship that I have encountered in my senior year of high school. But still, not many know of this tremendous opportunity. It is important to spread the word about this scholarship to youth contemplating furthering their education in college. This information could completely change the way that they weigh their options.



## Balance Jobs and College— or ELSE

by Tracea P



Scholarships are very important because balancing a job or two while in school can be very difficult.

My personal experience has shown that going to school is not enough. You have to keep your grades up in order to maintain your status as a student in good standing.

You can lose balance and your grades can start falling if you pay too much attention to all it takes to have a job such as the number of hours you work and the amount of travel time required. When you lose balance, you lose study time and as I said, your grades start falling and opportunities are no longer options. This causes confusion and irritation.

I am living successfully now. My grades are good. I have decided a job can wait because when I graduate from college, I will have a great job. If you want to successfully balance work and school, apply for scholarships. If you are fortunate enough to receive one, make an effort to give yourself the chance to have a better, happier life, if you get a job, balance it and your grades.

# HOLLA BACK AT US

## 2007 High School Graduates

The Statewide Youth Advisory Board wants to partner with DCFS Staff to find out who did what in high school. If you are graduating high school in 2007, Please fill out the form below. Fax it to 773-288-4345 or put the information into an email and send it to [jyma@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jyma@sbcglobal.net) or mail it to Open Book Program – 2nd Floor, 435 East 35th street, Chicago, Illinois 60616, Attention: Yvonne Jeffries. You can also include a photograph if you want to.

So **HOLLA BACK AT US** by June 10, 2007. We'll use the information to give you a big CONGRATUALTIONS in a future issue of *For Youth By Youth*.



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

High School \_\_\_\_\_ GPA \_\_\_\_\_ (optional)

Extra curricula activities \_\_\_\_\_

### Check all that applies. I am:

Class President \_\_\_\_\_ Vice President \_\_\_\_\_ Class Treasurer \_\_\_\_\_

Valedictorian \_\_\_\_\_ Salutatorian \_\_\_\_\_

I belong to these school clubs \_\_\_\_\_

I played these sports \_\_\_\_\_

I earned these letters in sports \_\_\_\_\_

Member of the school's honor society \_\_\_\_\_ Member of the National Honor Society \_\_\_\_\_

I was voted the \_\_\_\_\_

### After High School, I am:

I'm going to \_\_\_\_\_ College, University, Trade School

I received \_\_\_\_\_ Scholarship

I'm going to work at \_\_\_\_\_

My vision for my life is \_\_\_\_\_

My advice to kids is \_\_\_\_\_

***CHANGE IT UP—YOU CAN DO IT!***

# Representing for Youth In Care

*Here's how SYAB has been doing it*

## The DCFS Care Giver's Institute for Foster Parents

by Amber H.

The Care Giver's Institute is a meeting that is attended by youth, foster parents, caseworker and other DCFS employees. The purpose of the Institute is to bring foster children and foster parents together to exchange information, share ideas and problem solve. For instance, a foster mom might want to better understand how to have situations with her foster daughter or son. The foster parent might ask you if you have ever been in that situation, or how do you feel about it? You have an opportunity to give your opinion and help the foster parent and the foster child.

The Institutes are important. Youth, foster parents and DCFS staff from all over the State of Illinois attend. I encourage all youth in care to talk with your caseworker and the staff at your agency and, if you live in a private foster home, your parents about attending. In my opinion, it is an honor to be asked to attend these meetings. I have attended one. I am scheduled to attend another Institute on April 7th in Rockford, Illinois and one in Kankakee on April 17.

## Youth Summits

by Ricardo T.

A Youth Summit is a one or two-day meeting that DCFS sponsors for Youth in Care. DCFS staff work with members of the Statewide Youth Advisory Board (SYAB) and other youth in care to decide on the theme, select workshop presenter and topics that will be discussed.

Some workshop topics are Preparing for Emancipation, Life after Emancipation, Healthy Relationships, Teen Dating and Violence, Going to College and How to Get a Scholarship.

In addition to obtaining information, youth will also meet new youth and adults, have an opportunity to forge many useful relationships and get acquainted with the SYAB.

Youth Summits promote achievement, togetherness and education. The next one will be late Spring or early summer. It is a great opportunity. To learn more about the Youth Summit, come to your next Regional meeting

## Driver's License Mania

by Larry A.

So you just turned 16 and we all know what that means: you want a driver's license. But, do you know the steps it takes to obtain a license?

Since you are a youth in foster care, you will have a harder time obtaining a license than some of your peers who are not in foster care. One of the reasons is, IDCFS, our legal parent, does not have a fund set up to help youth in foster care to get their license. In the past, many youth in foster care have waited until 21 when they age out of the system to take their test and get their license. Well, that may be changing.

The Southern Regional Youth Advisory Board (YAB) have been assigned the responsibility of setting up a committee to look at the pros and cons of youth in foster care getting a driver license. While the Committee is doing its work, I want to share some information with you.

Youth living in the Southern and Central regions can get state fees for Driver's Ed class waived. To do this,

- Get a Fee Waiver Form from the office at your school, have it completed by your caregiver or your caseworker.
- Return the form to your school. They will verify your status as a youth in care and notified that Drivers Ed your fee waiver has been approved.

If you live in a district that does not offer driver's ed, you can take driver's ed in another district by showing documentation from your school that says you are eligible to take the class.

Also, youth from low-income families can get their fee waived too. They have to have proof of family income that include W-2 forms.

In the meantime, the committee will continue to work with DCFS staff and our caregiver to figure out the pros and cons. If you want to have input, come you the next southern regional advisory board meeting.



# CHANGE IT UP—YOU CAN DO IT!

## Words to Live By

by Amy J.

*"We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people."*

**-- Martin Luther King Jr.**

Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote the words above in the famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail" on April 16th, 1963. King wrote this letter while in jail in Birmingham after being arrested during a peaceful demonstration against segregation. In the letter, he argued that people should be direct with their thoughts and actions. His thoughts were that injustices were happening in Birmingham, and it was morally wrong for him to be residing in Atlanta and doing nothing about these injustices. In other words, King saw his idle behavior as a crime to humanity. He stated that "whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." To King, the misuse of the awesome power of one's voice was a far worse crime than discrimination. King was defending his right of free speech in this letter, a right that some of us need to use more often.

As Americans, we are given the right of free speech. The first Amendment states that "Congress shall make no law... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." This means that the government is barred from making any law that restricts a person's right to speak out about anything at any venue. This right gives every individual so much power. With this right, just one person can do so much.

As today's youth, it is our responsibility to step up and start talking. Our silence is a betrayal to ourselves. If we think something is wrong, then we should say so. Sitting idly while something unjust is happening is worse than the action itself. The founding fathers gave us the right of free speech for a reason. Implementing this right will help our generation to improve our nation with each day.

## College Bound Students Attend Essay Writing Workshop

A shout out to six youth who made time in their busy schedules to attend the Essay Writing workshops facilitated by The Open Book Program and sponsored by DCFS. Here's what Brad, Leslie, Isreal and Eddie from Lawrence Hall Youth Service and Courtney and Dionne from downstate said about it.

### The most important thing I learned was:

- How to write an essay for college
- Writing structure
- I am better at things than I think I am
- Writing an essay takes a little finesse

### I would attend another workshop like this:

- It would teach me something good.
- It is good and it helped me
- It is helpful when I am going to apply for college
- It was great
- It was fun and useful
- It was a good way to refresh what I'd already learned

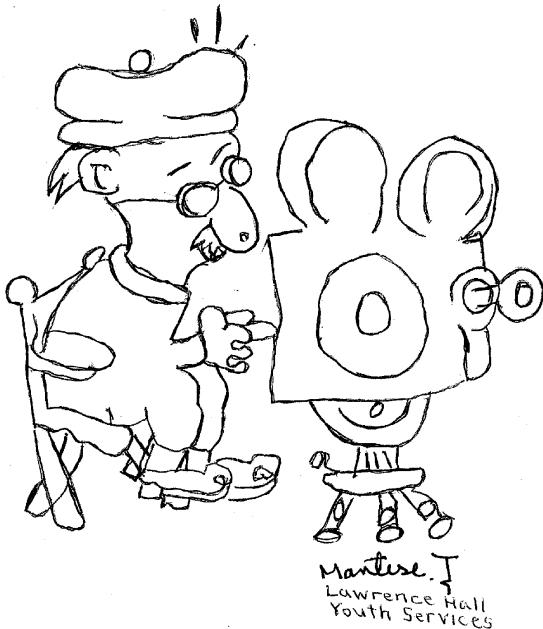
### What will you tell other youth about this workshop?

- They should attend it
- Everything
- It can help you
- It does help and would help many people
- It was actually kind of fun and definitely worth it

## Steppin' Up



## To Their Future



# Lending Our Voices

## The Other Voice

by Ashley P.

The rusted bars of the cell squeaked as the oversized guard forced it open.

In addition to spending a childhood floating from home to home, thousands of youth in care are spending their adolescence and early adulthood behind bars

that squeak when forced open by oversize guards. Though these youth made bad choices that landed them in the clutches of the prison system, they still have a valuable voice.

Incarcerated youth make up approximately 10% of the youth in care and approximately 20% of all inmates in the State of Illinois. If you think jail is the best place for these youth, you have never been to a jail. They need guidance and structure not rusty cells and a cot. They represent us. We should not disown them. That is why every effort needs to be made to ensure that their voices are heard in the Statewide Youth Advisory Board Newsletter, *For Youth By Youth*.

## LGBT Support Groups

by Dennis

As a member of the LGBT community, I want to ask that there be a good support group for LGBT youth in each of the DCFS Regions and that these group meet on a regular basis. I attended a LGBT support group and it was very helpful.

Even though LGBT youth are not what some members of society think of as "normal," we should not be treated differently than other youth. As a gay young man, I have learned to live with and even laugh at what people say about me. I have been fortunate enough to have youth come out to me but there are many other youth who want to come out but are afraid because of what people might say and of being rejected by those to whom they are close.

DCFS' continued support of LGBT youth will, as it does for other youth, help them understand and learn to love themselves and prevent depression and prevent thoughts of hurting themselves and suicide. Like heterosexual youth, LGBT youth need help in order to get over certain areas of their lives and move on and be proud of who they are.

Lets find a way to build upon what DCFS has started and make sure there are enough support group for LBGT youth in foster care.

## Teen Dating and Violence

by Carissa W.

Teen dating and violence is a major problem that threatens the mental health and safety of teen all over the country.

For example, in the Downstate Southern Region alone approximately five out of seven young women I know are experiencing date-related violence.. One question people often ask when they see young women in relationships that are violent is, "why do they tolerate the violence?" From what I see everyday, my answer would be, they are blinded by love. And as a famous female Rapper sang, "Love is blind and it will takes over your mind, what you think is love its truly not."

Women in violent relationships often cannot see their boyfriends are abusing them. They make excuses for the behavior. They do not associate a boyfriend who controls who they hang out with, what they do and what they say, t with abuse. When asked why they puts up with this kind of treatment, all they can say is "I love him and he loves me."

Teen dating and violence is an issue that needs to be addressed as soon as possible. Cook south and north regions just had a workshop regarding this issue. I feel we need more of these workshops so we can stop the madness.

### Word is:

- Dating violence among middle school and high school students range from 28% to 96%.
- One in 11 high-school students said they had been hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their boyfriend or girlfriend in the past year.
- One in 11 students also reported that they had been forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to.
- As high as 96% of teens report emotional and psychological abuse in their dating relationships.

*Continued on page 13*

# Poetry Poetry Poetry Poetry

## Here are lies...

by Traceea D.

Here are lies...

I tried to hide  
Written on my face  
Are the struggles I fight to forget.

So

As I open my eyes  
There were no tears  
Tired eyes is all I show.

I hold out  
My hand open

For

This is the time  
Help is needed.

## Don't Even Think About it

by Jahlisa G.

If you've ever thought about dropping out;  
Giving up on your education DON'T.

You have come so far with all of the  
Personal issues related to being In foster care;  
the struggles of life alone.

The road gets rough but you have made it this  
far.

You can go even further if you want.

## CUPID

by Steven M.

If you think you are all alone  
Call a friend on the phone

Think about all your bad times  
Don't deny and do not lie

Don't get depressed or start to cry  
Hold up your head and don't be shy

Just talk to someone you really like  
Buy them a gift or just be nice

Ask for a hug don't be a bug  
And then one day you may fall in love.

## Who Will Cry For the Rough Thug?

by Ashley P.

Who will cry for the rough thug  
Deeply rooted in the streets?

Who will cry for the rough thug  
Who just tried to make ends meet?

Who will cry for the rough thug  
Who never had a chance?

Who will cry for the rough thug  
Who always sag his pants?

Who will cry for the rough thug  
whose crimes are like treason,

Who will cry for the rough thug  
committing crimes for a reason?

Who will cry for the rough thug  
locked in prison, living strife.

Who will cry for the rough thug  
serving 25 to life?

## The Smartest Angel

by Kieran W.

The Smartest Angel Is someone that came to  
help me through.

is someone who is not going to lie to you  
is someone that has confidence in what you do.  
Is someone who has a caring heart like she do,  
Is someone that is going to support you when  
you're feeling disappointed.

Is someone that helps you look past your  
aggressive thing

Is someone that's going to keep it real  
with what she thinks.

Is someone who you talk to every other day  
Is someone that wants to know how  
your weekday been.

The Smartest Angel is someone that makes me  
smile and fills me full of pride, is someone I  
truly count on to not let me down.

## Sometimes I cry

by Kieran W.

Sometimes I cry

cause what I did that was wrong  
wasn't right and every time at  
\night I think hard and hold the pillow tight.

I'm sorry for what I've done  
whenever you were hurt.  
I would give you my arm  
and when you needed my  
help, I never told you "no"  
and when you needed my  
love, I tried to give you my heart and soul.

Sometimes I cry.

## Cutting... by Steven M.

those people that do it to get attention I know how it  
feels when you are not getting enough attention from  
friends and family. Some times I felt I was different and still I think that—sometimes.  
For those who really cut because some thing went wrong. You can live through  
that pain

You can do it

Just think of people that want you to be successful or think positive fun things you want to do in life. You have to want to change.  
You might think no one cares about you but they do and I wish people did not have to cut to release their pain people should be able to  
talk about any thing. You should go to your parents and tell them I need love I need some one to care for me. Parents should also listen  
to their kids and love them to the fullest extent. If you die you won't be able to get married, or achieve your goal in life.

Here's some thing to think about:

When you have kids, if you are going to have kids, and your kids ask, "what are those scars from," What will you tell them?



# Poetry is Writing Too

by Yvonne Jeffries

Ya' call it the Spoken Word. Back in the day, we called it rhyming, signifying—whatever—it is all poetry: It's prose. It can be a Limerick, a slam, a sonnet, a ballad, a hip-hop piece—the list could go for a couple city blocks. The point is this type of writing is intended to tickle the heart, tease the mind, or in the case of the “old” Lauren Hill, make you raise yo hand and shout like in your church.

DCFS certainly has enough young poets, who are good enough to have braggin' rights. You guys are not wanna bees. You are young poets who are obviously interested in this art form. You have natural talent and potential.

Here the deal. Creative writing requires the same level of skill development as technical writing. When you write poetry, you can break a rule, but it should not look like a mistake. The skill is knowing why you want to break a rule and knowing how to break it. Example: ee cummings—from way back in the day (1874)—is still widely read today. He is known for not using punctuation, using it differently, making up words, and deliberately misspelling words. In other words, breaking the rules. He was and still is criticized about his style, but no one has ever referred to his style as a mistake.

You guys are good, no question about it. But let me ask you this: Is being good enough? If not, then here's what this “old” poet can tell you:

- Read others poets for style, form, structure, meter, syntax, word choice, etc.
- Write whether you are inspired or not. It's how you learn the skill.
- Write a poem once and revise it 25 times if necessary.
- Read poetry out loud. You need to hear it.
- Remember you can believe in your ability and learn from others at the same time. Don't be arrogant.

I was talking with the guy who is perpetrating as a poet. I said, “Who do you read?” “Nobody,” he said. “I don't want my poem to be influenced by anyone else. I'm original.” My response was, “You need to get over yourself. None of us is original. We are simply being creative with what someone else has done.”

Lay those words on paper anyway you want to, but learn to do what ee.cummings did so well. A poet recognizes her or his talent and develops the skills necessary to reach his or her potential.

√**this:** If you call yourself a poet and you don't own at least one rhyming dictionary, you're perpetrating.

# **B r a i n** **Bling-Bling**

Sudoku is not a math game. It's a thinking game. If you want to show off your brain, step up to this challenge.

The first five people to fax (773-288-4345) their completed and correct puzzle to me will receive a battery operated Sudoku Mega Screen and a package of 12 batteries. The answer—and the winners will be published in the next issue of our newsletter.

A Sudoku puzzle has nine 3x3 boxes. To complete, fill in the empty squares in each box so every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains numbers from 1 to 9.

				8	1			
4	8						7	
	7			2				5
	5					7		1
			4					
			8		9		3	2
				3				
1		9						
2		7			5			



Have a question? Send it to us and we'll get back at ya. Send your question to: [jyma@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jyma@sbcglobal.net) or fax to 773-288-4345 or mail to For Youth/By Youth Newsletter, Open Book Program, 435 East 35th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60616

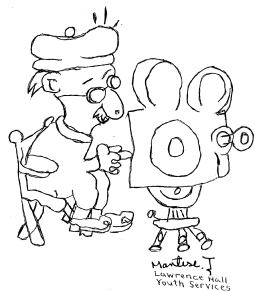
*Dear Michelle,*

Sounds like you know what to do. Your answer was in your question. You know what you want. You know what you don't want. You understand that its not J.R's decision. It's not Walter T's decision. It's yours. You're a smart young lady. You've solved the problem. Now make the decision and take action.

You can buy 100 pairs of shoes.

You'll still just have 2 feet.

***Back at ya***



# Lending Our Voices

Continued from page 7

## Emancipation Does Not Mean Freedom

by Rena G.

The current state of "best practice" for emancipating youth is ineffective to say the least. Despite all the training, programs and staff dedicated to preparing youth for life after care, youth are failing post-care at tremendous rates.

I am the President of the IDCFS Statewide Youth Advisory Board. I thought I had this emancipation thing down. I was doing everything I KNEW to do to prepare myself for my 21st birthday, also the date of my emancipation. Little did I know that my celebrations would be short lived. Soon after my birthday and the date I emancipated from DCFS had come and gone, I began to experience many of the horrors of my ill-educated preparation. The sad truth, I am not alone.

From my perspective, it seems as if half of the youth I know who emancipate do so prematurely and the other half suffer horribly due to lack of support and service once they leave the system. A perfect example is my situation.

When I emancipated from care, I applied for government food assistance also known as LINK. I was denied my first time. I was a full-time student with little or no income. Because I don't have any children and work twenty hours

a week, I was denied. I was told that even though I am a diabetic as long as I receive so much as a penny from my ILO agency, I was ineligible for public aid. I feel that some of the responsibility to connect youth to these resources and others like it falls partly on the Department. Negotiations on how to provide an easier application process for youth should be happening. Instead it wasn't until I was flailing like a fish out of water, living on limited income and having difficulty meeting my other basic needs did I get a LINK card.

I still don't have a medical card. I was threatened to have my LINK cut off when Public Aid found out that I receive Youth In College stipend, which is \$458. My rent alone is \$650.00 and that does not include utilities. I would like the Department to address issue such as mine proactively. So far I have been frustrated by how my situation has been handled. This is insufficient because I believe most youth would not know how to connect with services out side of DCFS. If the Department continues to fail youth in this area, there is a possibility that youth may end up in shelters, prison cells, or laying on concrete streets throughout the State. There needs to be a change and that change needs to happen now.

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## Prepare for Emancipation

*"You see the old way wasn't working so it's on us to do what we got to do... We got to start making some changes..."* Tupac Shakur

**Learn life skills:** Study the freshman, sophomore, junior and senior year checklist for academic success

**Determine whether you are eligible for:**

- Education and training vouchers
- Employment Incentive Program
- Illinois Community College Payment Program
- Medical card
- Scholarship Program
- Youth Housing Assistance Program
- Youth in College/Vocational Training Program
- The enhanced Subsidized Guardianship and Adoption Program

**Call DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services  
312 - 814 - 5959**

Be an active participant in your ACR (Administrative Case Review)  
Be an active participant in your CAYIT (Children and Youth Investment Team)



# Close and Personal

## My Missing Piece: How I found My Father

by Michael C.

Hello! My name is Michael C. I am 18 years old and moved to Catholic Children's Home (CCH) TLP program in 2006. Ever since then, I have been steadily doing research to find my biological Mother and Father. Finding my Mother is difficult. I still have not found her though I am still looking. I did find my Father because I found out where he was working.

The number of my Father's job was not in the phone book and the 411 Operator did not have the number in her information file. I continued my research by getting the phone number to another place of business that was near where I thought my Father worked. The guy who owned the business was very nice to me and helped me greatly. He gave me the telephone number to another business. I called and asked if I could talk to my Dad. Of course, I knew he was probably busy so I left a message. My Dad called me back. At the end of February, we had a visit. My Father told me how much he missed me. We had not seen each other for 11 years. I had not seen my Father since I was seven.

My friends who took me to see My Father said when he embraced me they almost cried. When I saw him and he saw me, he asked, "Is that you?" I said, "Yep, this is me." Then we embraced. I felt so good because I knew he really meant well and he wanted to take care of me but couldn't when I was seven because he had financial problems. My Father is doing a lot better now and he said he would take care of me if I wanted to move out of CCH.

The day I saw my Father for the first time in 11 years really made a difference for me. I kind of found a missing piece of what I have been looking for since I was seven years old. What I did for 11 years was keep my mind on finding those missing pieces. I kept researching and I got superb results. The results: I found my Father—one of my missing pieces.





# Up Close and Personal

## Drake University student speaks to legislators at Washington, D.C. forum

Robert James Johnson likes to say that God's taken him from the "guttermost to the uttermost." Well he's not quite to the uttermost. He's got big dreams; the name of his hip-hop radio show attests to that. He and co-host Kirby Weber, both first-year students at Drake University in Des Moines, call their show, "The Young Legends Not Yet but Soon to Be." Every Friday night and Saturday morning on the campus station KDRA "The Dog," they talk about tough issues like AIDS, black history, youth depression and suicide, drawing listeners of all ages, races, and social positions. But there's one issue that Johnson is particularly well versed in, and this March he'll have the opportunity to discuss it with a much more powerful audience.

Johnson has been asked to speak on a panel at a forum titled "Promote Permanent Families: Reform Foster Care Now," which was held on March 12 in Washington, D.C. The purpose of the forum was to inform members of Congress, their staff members, child welfare professionals, adoptive and foster parents, and the public about how federal financing adjustments could help move children quickly from foster care to safe, permanent families, or to avoid foster care in the first place.

Johnson spoke as an advocate for the national availability of subsidized guardianship. He'll met with Sen. Barack Obama and other important political figures, hoping to convince them that children who have been removed from their homes should have the opportunity to be reunited with family members. (He also hopes to schedule them as guests on his radio show.)

He says a few common arguments against subsidized guardianship are that children will be emotionally harmed by remaining with their family and that there's "no justice" in it. He tends to disagree.

### From the College Front



"Every child is different," Johnson said, "But the subsidized guardianship program should be available to every kid who wants to go into a family situation." In Johnson's experience, it worked out for the best.

**See  
Robert's story  
on page 13.**



## Robert Johnson's Story

When Johnson was six years old, he and two of his sisters were removed from their mother's custody. The children were placed in the temporary custody of Johnson's godparents, who treated them, as Johnson describes, "Not well at all." The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services quickly had the children removed and placed under the permanent legal custody of their aunt. It was one of Illinois' first cases of subsidized guardianship.

Under subsidized guardianship, a family member or other adult is made the permanent legal guardian of children. But unlike adoption, the birth parents often do not lose rights such as visitation. His aunt cared for them like a second mother, Johnson said, and living with her was more than preferable to the alternatives of being placed in a foster home or in the custody of a stranger.

"If my aunt didn't take us, I don't even want to think about what would have happened," Johnson said.

Despite finally being in a stable home, his grades were suffering. "When I returned to Chicago I wasn't doing well in school and everyone thought that I wasn't going to graduate from eighth grade," he said. "But, I was blessed." A program called Boys Hope Girls Hope took him under its wing and paid for his tuition at Loyola Academy, a private college preparatory school located just outside of Chicago. He went to school with Michael Jordan's sons, Jeff and Marcus, who play basketball at Loyola. He lived in the dorms, studied hard and excelled.

When Johnson was accepted to Drake University, Boys Hope Girls Hope leader and Drake Board of Trustees member Rudy Trebel offered him a full, four-year scholarship to the University. Johnson was the first student to receive the scholarship. He plans to major in general business and earn a minor in communications or religion.

He aims to blow the lid off the Des Moines hip-hop market. To keep discussing the hot-button issues. And, thanks to this upcoming D.C. trip, maybe even help move some legislation.

*Robert Johnson was a member of the  
Statewide Youth Advisory Board.  
He graduated high school June 2006.*



## The SYAB Welcomes Jeffrey G.

Dear SYAB,

My name is Jeffrey G. Jr. I have just moved to Ornaga Academy and have a better opportunity to get involved with the Statewide Youth Advisory meetings.

I am letting you all know where you can mail information about meetings. I couldn't make meeting in the past because my former foster parent would not take me and I got information about meeting as much as five days late.

Now I am willing to follow all the rules. I have friends that can come and help make a big difference for youth too. I am hoping to hear from you.

Jeffrey G.

Dear Jeffrey,

The Statewide Youth Advisory Board is looking forward to meeting you and your friends at your next regional meeting—Se holla out when you get there! We can always use the help of some new breeds.

SYAB

**Hey Jeffrey—  
and all other  
new breeds out there!**

**See the Regional Board  
Meeting Schedule  
on page 15.**





## Scholarship Opportunities

*In College Already? Are You Graduating? High School Next Year?*

*Begin your 2007-2008 Scholarship search now.*

### DCFS Scholarship Opportunity

Turn to page 3 and check out Amy J's article, "DCFS Scholarship Opportunities: You CAN'T Afford—NOT to Take Advantage of This!!!"

### PPIA Fellowship Program

**Description:** The PPIA Fellowship Program is designed to prepare college juniors or rising college seniors, especially from diverse communities, for graduate study in public policy, public administration and international affairs.

**To Qualify:** You must be in your junior year of undergraduate studies and demonstrate a strong interest in pursuing a graduate degree and career in public service.

**Contact:** [www.ppiaprogram.org/app/](http://www.ppiaprogram.org/app/) or call 202-296-0130 X 206.

### Xerox Technical Minority Scholarship Program

**Description:** These are scholarships for minority students pursuing technical or engineering degrees as well as its work-study internships.

**To Qualify:** You must be full-time students enrolled at a four-year institution

**Contact:** <http://www.xerox.com/go/xrx/template/009>.

### American Chemistry Society Scholars program

**Description:** This is open to high school and college students interested in Chemistry and other sciences

**To Qualify:** You must have a 3.0 GPA or better in chemistry and other sciences.

**Contact:** Call toll-free 1-800-227-5558 (Ext. 6250) or send an e-mail to [scholars@acs.org](mailto:scholars@acs.org).

### Natl Restaurant Association Education Foundation

**Description:** This is for high school grads with diploma or GED interested in culinary arts or food service management.

**To Qualify:** You must attend an accredited school, college or university.

**Contact:** Call 1-800 -765-2122 x 744.

### Cisco Systems Internet Generation Award

**Description:** This is for the high school graduate with a long-term interest in engineering.

**To Qualify:** You must be interested in electrical engineering.

**Contact:** <http://academics.cs.utexas.edu/undergraduate/scholarships/Cisco.Sys.Schol.pdf>. Or call 512-471-9523.

### Scholarship Award in Vision and Medicine

**Description:** This encourages students to seek careers in medicine and visual science.

**To Qualify:** You must be a high school student of under-represented or economically disadvantaged group.

**Contact:** <http://www.muhealth.org/-ophthamology/savm.shtml>

### Scholarships that fit YOU!

**Description:** FastWeb.com matches scholarships to a profile you fill out. Free and easy registration.

**Contact:** Check them out at [FastWeb.com](http://FastWeb.com).



## Statewide Youth Advisory Board Meeting Schedule

Proposed Itinerary - FY 2006

May 18th - 20th, 2007, Cook – Central, Gurnee, IL

## Regional Youth Advisory Board Meeting Schedule

Proposed Itinerary - FY 2006

Please note each regional board meets once a month.  
Please contact Antwan Turpeau at 1-888-472-0990 x 242.

**D/S Southern RYAB**  
Every 1st Tuesday  
12 N. 64th Street  
Belleville, IL 62223  
5:30pm – 8:00pm

Tuesday, May 1, 2007  
Tuesday, June 5, 2007  
*\*Adjusted meeting dates due to holiday(s) or holiday travel.*

**D/S Northern RYAB**  
Every 3rd Thursday  
Aurora Field Office  
8 E. Galena Blvd.  
Aurora, Illinois 60506  
6:00pm – 8:00pm

Tuesday, May 15, 2007  
Tuesday, June 19, 2007

**D/S Central RYAB**  
Every 3rd Wednesday  
Bellarmine Newman  
Catholic Center  
501 S. Main  
Normal, IL 60761  
5:00pm – 7:30pm

Wednesday, May 16, 2007  
Wednesday, June 20th, 2007

**Cook Regions**  
Every 3rd Thursday  
(Rotating location schedule between Cook North, Cook Central and Cook South regional offices.)  
5:30pm – 8:00pm

Thursday, May 18, 2006  
Cook North, 1921 S. Indiana  
Thursday, June 15, 2006  
Cook South, 6201 S. Emerald

## News Reporters Needed for our Teen Violence Issue

A news reporter gathers information by interviewing, observing and researching. The reporter analyzes the information and writes the report that is a combination of facts and opinions. The five types of reporter are: investigative, general assignment, special assignment, beat and string.

### Special Assignment Reporters Needed

SYBA will be publishing a special newsletter this summer on Teen Violence. We are looking for four Special Assignment Reporters.

**Topic:** Write an article on Teen Violence. The article must answer three questions:

1. What is teen violence?
2. What causes teen violence?

3. What can be done to stop teen violence?

**Requirement:** Interest, commitment and ability to meet deadline which is June 30, 2007.

Each reporter will receive a \$25.00 stipend and a certificate. Also reporters' articles will be published in the newsletter and they will be invited to visit and have lunch at a television or radio station with reporters.

If you're 14 or older, send your article by e-mail to [jyma@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jyma@sbcglobal.net) or fax it to 773-288-4345 by June 30th.

Report must be at least 500 words (1 page) and typed.

**Deadline:** June 30, 2007

# We're Looking For...



**Fair Exchange:**  
**Send it to us—**  
**and we'll send**  
**you a book**

Open Book has the following books you can have. But since nothing in life is really free, we'll do an exchange. If you want one of the books listed below, send us an article for the newsletter or a poem or prose, and you'll get the book of your choice. You can do a drawing but you have to tell us what it means.

1. *Creating poetry*
2. *The Art and Craft of Poetry*

3. *Spanish/English Dictionary*
4. *Swahili-English Dictionary*
5. *Greek English Dictionary*
6. *Dictionary of Misspelled and Easily Confused Words*

Send your submission by e-mail to [jyma@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jyma@sbcglobal.net) or fax it to 773-288-4345 by June 10th. Make sure you tell us which book you want and where to send it.

## July 2007 AmLak Writing Challenge—What is your position?

The writing challenge Topic: Fast food restaurants such as MacDonald's, Burger King, KFC, Taco Bell, Pizza Hunt, Long John Silver are responsible for the increased number of children and youth who are considered to be overweight or obese due to food consumption.

### Research findings:

- MacDonald's spent over \$1.3 billion on advertising in 2002 in the United States alone. In 2001, Burger King spent \$80 just on advertising to children.
- Children's requests for food choices have been shown to be linked to television advertising.
- The incident of obesity is highest among children who watch four or more hours of television a day and lowest among children watching an hour or less a day.

**To meet the challenge:** Write a position paper (no more than 500 words) that give your opinion on this topic.

**Books that can help your research:** Fast Food Nation by Eric Schlosser \$13.95; Consuming Kids by Susan Linn \$14.00. These books are available in the Chicago Public Library and other libraries.

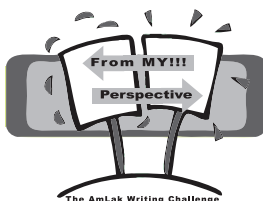
**Deadline:** Submission must be typed and received by June 15, 2007. Send your submission to:

**e-mail:** [jyma@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jyma@sbcglobal.net)

**Fax:** 773-288-0128

**Mail:** Open Book Program, 2nd Floor  
435 East 35th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60616  
**Attention:** Yvonne Jeffries

Two position papers will be selected for publication in the July, 2007 newsletter. In addition, writers will receive **\$25.00** and a signed certificate. With DCFS approval their pictures will be in the newsletter too.



# ***Graduation Celebration in Honor of DCFS Youth Accomplishments***



## **Holla Back At Us**

**Send in the form  
on page 4**

**by Katrina L. and Jahlisa G.  
Cook Central - Cook South**

Whether you are graduating from elementary school. High school, vocational school, college or earned your GED, graduation is a major accomplishment. That is the reason DCFS has an annual celebrations in honor youth who graduate.

The Department of Children and Family Services and Regional Youth Advisory Boards partner to plan and coordinate graduation activities. The planning for 2007 graduation celebrations has begun. Celebrations will be held this summer after school is out.

Why not join your peers at your region's next youth Advisory meeting so you can have a voice in planning how graduation will be celebrated.

And don't forget to Halla Back at Us here at SYAB so we can give you a big CONGRATULATIONS in a future newsletter. Fill out the form on page 4 and send it back to us today!

For Youth By Youth  
c/o The Open Book Program  
435 E. 35th St.,  
Chicago, IL 60616

for **YOUTH**  
by **YOUTH**

A Newsletter  
of the SYAB  
for Youth in Care  
in the State of Illinois